
Foreword

The face of development is constantly evolving, and so is the approach that SNV Netherlands Development Organization takes to the work that we do in developing countries around the world. At the country level we are always striving to hone our strategies to respond to critical needs on the ground with approaches and tools that borrow from successful local experiences as well as from elsewhere, and adapt these to local realities. We try to be a learning organization, and the lessons we learn have to be from what we, ourselves, do, as much as from what we see others doing.

We have learned a great deal from our experience in implementing the Semi Arid Rural Development Programme in Kenya, just as our original design and adaptation of strategies for SARDEP learned both from the ASAL programme that preceded it and from innumerable other “best practices” around the globe. We have learned particularly that in empowering communities to take control over their own development there is no “magic bullet”, no tailor-made solution that can be applied to guarantee success. Nonetheless, we do believe there are a number of basic principles that must be adopted if any success is hoped for. These include recognizing that local communities have the capacity to manage their own development, that they must be the full owners of development initiatives, and that decision-making and action must be founded on democratic, transparent and accountable procedures.

We have learned that, above all else, we have to be open and engage all actors, women and men, in the process: local and national government, NGOs and private sector, and, of course, the farmers, business folk, religious and community leaders, and all those who live and work in the real world of the semi-arid lands of Kenya.

In our view SARDEP has been a successful programme – so much so that our other work in Kenya is adopting many of the lessons learned from SARDEP. It is for this reason that we decided to carry out an extensive documentation process. For SNV-Kenya the *Compendium of Experiences* will provide us with a comprehensive tool-kit for our staff and partners to use in their various activities throughout the country. For others – be they development workers, extension officers, NGO leaders, policy makers, students or other interested readers – we hope it will provide you with some new insights or helpful ideas. By sharing with you what we have learned, perhaps we will have made a contribution to efforts towards sustainable development beyond SARDEP.

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